

## THE LIFE OF ROBERT LEE ISON

by  
Louie May (Savage) Ison

### "I Am Your Wife"

Oh, let me lay my head tonight upon your breast,  
And close my eyes against the light. I fain would rest, I'm weary  
And the world looks sad, this worldly strife  
Turns me to you, and, Oh, I'm glad to be your wife-  
Though friends may fail or turn aside, yet I have you  
And in your love I may abide, for you are true  
I'd e'er remain bereft of friends, though true or not.  
Just to retain your true regard,  
Your presence bright thro' care and strife;  
And, Oh I thank My God tonight, I am your wife.

from "Heart Throbs"

Robert Lee Ison was the first living child of Richmond and Martha Rice Ison. He was born the 9th of June 1881 on the Newcomb fork of the Little Sandy River in Elliott County, Kentucky. When his parents were married, Feb. 1879, they lived for a few months with Richmond's father and mother, about two miles from the tract of land (75 acres) given to them as a wedding present from his parents. During this time Richmond worked very hard from early morning to late night to clear a small piece of this land and plant a crop in time for it to mature that fall. During this time he also built a small log cabin for them to live in.

Richmond's land was located on the east side of the Rocky Branch Creek. The tract contained only a few acres of flat level soil called "bottom land," and it was here that the house and family well were to stand with a small vegetable garden, while back on the hillsides and over the top, the fields of corn, oats and tobacco were located. But as irrigation is unheard of in the South, crops will grow as good running straight up hill as ours do on the flat plains. God does all of the irrigating there and almost every year He does a splendid job.

In this little log cabin, with its overhead loft and great fireplace which sent its dancing flames up the stick and mud chimney, little Robert Lee came with a hearty welcome, to make his home. Only the year before, his little brother Walter, had come and stayed only a few hours then returned to his heavenly home. Yes, Martha and Richmond wanted a baby boy, and Oh how they loved Robert and trusted and depended on him all their lives. Later he had a lot of brothers and sisters. Four more boys and four girls came in their turn. Baby Lucy only stayed a short time though, then she was buried on the hillside by Walter.

Mother Martha always said Robert was a very frail child. When he was very young he had pneumonia and she tells how she worked, watched, and prayed then rejoiced when he lived. The cute little things that her "little Bobbie" said and did were told over and over by her until the end of her 85 years.

One thing of paramount importance to young Robert was the building of a new home to replace the little log cabin. True, it was made of logs, but its three large rooms downstairs and two above, were like a mansion compared to the log cabin. There was no winding stairway at first, but the ladder was a great novelty to four year old Bobby. The large porch which took in the well on the south side of the house was modern conveniences personified. Now the bucket of water could be drawn without standing out in the rain. The house was mostly finished when they moved in and that very night baby Hulda was born. The birth of his tiny sister was a red letter day for blue-eyed Robert, though it was always a mystery as to how she knew just what house to come to. Of course Zebedee came two years before Hulda, but he was a boy and Bobbie was most too young to be much excited about his arrival.

Robert's school days commenced as most other children's, but away up there in the mountains of Kentucky, school wasn't as important as work was, for in those days a bare existence had to be wrung from the soil by unremitting toil and hard labor. The school term began when the snow covered the ground and the thermometer dropped too low for outside work, and it lasted only until the work could be begun again. The mountain folk lived miles apart on their scattered hilly farms and the school was situated in the center for the most children, so all walked long distances thru the snow because there was no bus then.

The Mountain Creed was, men and boys go first to break the trails and be the first to meet all dangers, so when Robert, Zebb and Hulda were dressed in their warmest homespun clothes, long wool cap, red knitted mittens and long gray socks over their shoes (as overshoes), the three children marched to school with Robert and Zebb in the lead, while Sis came trailing behind. Ofttimes she called them to stop and help her out of difficulties. Robert loved his school and generally his teachers. He especially liked one teacher because she knew so many pretty songs that he loved to sing. It was hard for him to understand why the men that came to sit around the fireplace in the evenings disliked his best-loved teacher and her singing. "Why that air Miss Emmy ain't no good at all. She should teach readin, writin, and rithmetic. That air singing stuff ain't what we're payin her fur."

School closed early in February so the boys could help Pap cut the barrel staves and fence rails from the timber on their farms. Robert learned early in life how to swing an ax and just how to cut a tree so it would fall within an inch of a planned mark. When the timber was cut into staves, it was loaded onto a one horse sleigh and drawn to the bank of the river. Here they were stacked into large, even piles to wait 'til spring. When the spring thaw came, the tiny babbling streams swelled into great rushing rivers. This was always an exciting time for all. The men and older boys would rush to their piles of timber along the edge of the river and when the man above had put all of his timber into the stream and it had been carried down to the buying yards, then the next man down the river took his turn. Sometimes the great logs would become tangled and gather in a mighty jam. Then someone had to go out in the river and pry the logs apart with a long pole. Sometimes it took several men to do the job of breaking up a jam and send the timber on down the river. This was a very dangerous job so only the most spry and experienced men were allowed to go into the river to break a log jam.

Never did young Robert forget the fateful day when his Uncle Marion Ison went in to break a jam. Suddenly the logs gave way and flew high into the air driven with super-human force by the rushing water. All on shore shouted "Jump Marion, jump for your life." He did jump, but he didn't clear the swift rushing logs and he was caught just above the hips. His hips were crushed and his legs were mangled. Kind hands took him from the stream and carried him to his mother's home. He only lived a few hours---not enough time for the old mountain Doctor to get there over the long crooked trails by horseback. But Marion would have gone anyway, even if a dozen good physicians had been present for his Heavenly Father had called him Home. It was a very sad funeral. The Mountain Folk are very tender and they love very deeply.

It wasn't all work or tragedy for Robert and the boys and girls. Each season of the year brought its fun as well as work. It was berry picking time in the spring and summer and nowhere in all the world do the black berries, blue berries and all kinds of berries grow larger, sweeter or in more abundance than in dear old Kentucky. But best of all was nutting time. Oh what fun they did have filling all of the empty barrels in the old wood shed with the large black walnuts, the smooth white hickory nuts then the chesnuts and Hazel nuts. There was always a good supply. The long winter evenings were spent popping corn, (a pleasure that Robert enjoyed until his death) cracking nuts, and eating apples. They all had good apple orchards for when their first ancestors walked over Mt. Blackie, thru Cumberland Pass from Virginia to Kentucky, they brought with them young apple trees tied to the barrels of their guns. They were planted and grew. Now Kentucky has plenty of such fruit. How those dear old "Hons" can make apple butter. I never tasted anything to compare with it in all my life.



Sunday was a day to visit kinfolk except about once in three months when the "Circuit Rider" came thru and they all went to church for a whole week or more. They came from many miles around, brought all the family, food in abundance, bedding etc. Some brought tents and small wood cook stoves. It was a regular outing time as well as a religious revival, but it did not matter what denomination they belonged to, everyone went and most all really go religion--- "They were Saved." Seemed like the young folks went to see each other, the girls to show their organdy dresses covered with ruffles and bright ribbon sashes, the boys went to see the girls and to eat. Robert was one of the boys and went for these same reasons.

When Robert was fifteen years old, a great change came into his life. It was a jar that completely upset the equilibrium of the family, their kindred and neighbors for miles around, but it was the turning point in Robert's life. It was the opportunity to learn the truth about God's plan for his children here on earth. It opened avenues of development to him for self improvement and education. It brought a different life, new friends and different customs and from all of these he received valuable lessons and experience which brought opportunity for service to others. "Religion that takes the form of ecstasy, with no outlet in the way of work, is very dangerous; for emotion without action tends to madness and despair."

The change came when Father Richmond and his brother attended a meeting held by two Mormon missionaries in the little school house on Rocky Branch. Richmond's purpose was not to find a new religion. Until that night he was perfectly satisfied with the one that he had, but the Gospel truths which he heard that night sank deep into his heart. He never got away from them the rest of his life. The Elders were invited to his home where they taught the principles of Salvation to him and his family. Then all who were old enough were baptized. Robert was baptized on 16 May 1896, by Elder Mathew Spears. Robert's testimony of the truthfulness of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints grew stronger every day of his life. Christ's words "My sheep know my voice" was surely true of Richmond and his family.

The neighbors and kindred were so shocked about Richmond joining the Mormons that they could not even treat the family decent. Richmond wanted to take his family to where they could have advantage of the organizations of the Church, but it took two years to dispose of the little farm, home and the family possessions that had to be sold. At length they gave most of their possessions away and left Kentucky 5 November, 1898, and went to Thatcher, Arizona. Before leaving their Kentucky home Robert and his brother went to the top of the hill where little Walter and Lucy were buried. They cleared the grass, weeds and underbrush away and at the head just between the two graves they planted a small Hickory nut tree, trusting that God would water it and help it to grow so that it would shade the two dear ones that they were leaving behind.

Life in the new place was a big adjustment. The people were different, they even talked, worked and played different---and they danced! Of course Methodists never danced. Robert soon enrolled in the Gila Academy. He liked it and the boys and girls and he even learned to dance.

Robert always smiled, even when he was angry and his smile took him places. It was at a dance in the winter of 1903 that Robert and I met. As we danced that night, I too was impressed by his smile. From the night of the dance until Oct. 1909, when he left for his mission, Robert and I kept steady company.



"High be for the man with a smile on his face, and a couple of wrinkles of care, and an eye that can twinkle in spite of his place, or the troubles he happens to bear."

Soon after moving to Thatcher, Robert began working in the Church organizations. He was a Sunday School teacher, then he had a group of Deacons to care for and from 1906 to 1908 he was the first counselor in the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association the Thatcher Ward. All these years he sang in the ward choir. Robert never had the opportunity of completing his High School course as his father began to fail in health and it was necessary for him to take a job to keep bread and butter on the family table, but he did take a very good Shop course in the Academy and later he became a first class carpenter.

On April 9, 1909 he received a call to be a missionary in the Southern States Mission. Notice for his departure came October 3th and he left Thatcher for Salt Lake City on the 27th, arriving there on October 30th. In Salt Lake he attended Missionary Classes until Nov. 3rd, when he with twenty-two other Elders left Utah for Denver, Colorado. Here fifteen of them got off. The other eight, of which Robert was one, went on to Chattanooga, Tennessee, reaching there November 7th. In Chattanooga he was given William Carpenter as his first companion and was assigned to labor in South Carolina. They reached Columbia on November 10th. From here they were sent to Camden, South Carolina. Robert had hoped that his labors might be in his old home state of Kentucky, but that was not his call so he truly said "I'll go where you want me to go dear Lord." He labored in North and South Carolina until the 16th of January 1912. Receiving an honorable release he returned to his home in Thatcher the last of January. He always said, "Yes, it was the happiest time of my life. Those who bring joy into the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves."

Robert and I corresponded all during his mission. I attended the Gila Academy in 1908-9 and 1909-10, spending the following summer in Los Angeles. Then I taught kindergarten for one year at Woodruff. Robert came to visit us in our Woodruff home in June 1912, soon after he returned from his mission. We had a wonderful time and made our plans to get married the following year. This we did in the Salt Lake Temple on June 5, 1913. Life really commenced then for both of us, but it was wonderful and we had such a variety of outstanding experiences, I give thanks each day for all of them. "God gave us memories that we might have roses in December."

After our marriage we spent two weeks in Salt Lake then we went to Los Angeles for four weeks where we visited my sister Alvonia Heywood and her family. We spent a lot of time at the ocean. I never tire of its grandures. Coming back to Holbrook to my parents home for two weeks, we then came over the White Mountains to Thatcher and I stayed a month with father and mother Ison. Robert was doing carpenter work in Miana, Arizona before we were married and he got a two months leave so he went back to his job, leaving me until he could obtain a house in the right location. I came to him on my birthday, Sept. 9, that was a very happy birthday for me. Robert had found us a suitable little place in Davis Canyon that we rented for a month, then made a contract to buy the house. We lived there for almost six years. They were very happy years indeed.



Robert and Louie in Salt Lake the day after they were married.  
6 June 1913



The Inspiration Copper Mill

Robert soon changed his place of work and was employed by the Inspiration Copper Company on the building of their large, new Mill. He worked here until we left Miami, helping on the Mill from the foundation to the completion of the building. At that time, it was the largest Copper Mill in the world. The Boss liked Robert very much and later when Robert quit the company, he urged him not to leave,

but we were determined that we would not raise our family in a Mining Camp. (We didn't want them to grow up in such an environment, so we made plans to go somewhere on a farm.) Twenty-five years later, when Robert passed away, this same company, The Inspiration Copper Co., wired flowers for his grave. Few working men are remembered for that many years by a company which hires and discharges men by the thousands every month. We felt it quite a tribute to him.

While we were in Miami, Robert completely remodeled our little home and built two new rooms on the north. We bought a new Singer sewing machine, because baby Bobbie was coming and Mothers those days made their own baby clothes. We did not have stork showers or ready-made baby clothes, but Daddy and I were both thrilled over the preparations.



Our home in Miami 1915

Baby Robert (our Bobbie) came the 16 of April 1914

and although babies have been coming every since Cain and Able were born, there was never a baby like him. HE WAS OURS. Not having a baby bed, we slept Bobbie in the large arm rocker right next to our bed until he was three months old. Daddy slept at the front of the bed so he could rock Bobbie when he cried, which was a lot of the time. Well, that very night when Bobbie was three months old, he grew just too big for the rocker and when, in the middle of the night, Robert commenced rocking him--plunk, he fell to the floor with a terrible thud. We scrambled to light the kerosene lamp and to pick up the precious pieces, but there he was, all in one piece and he didn't seem to have any corners knocked off. "Well", said Robert, "You must go to town tomorrow and buy a buggy for Bobbie to sleep in."

As we were making payments each month on the home, sewing machine, and even still some on our wedding trip, we were always run quite short and we would keep but only enough money from each pay check to tide us over until the next pay day. The rest of our money we put onto the payments. When I went to town the next morning to get Bobbie's buggy, I knew that we had exactly \$25 in the bank to buy our food until the next pay check. I saw lots of little black leather go carts, but I didn't want them, they looked cheap.



I wanted the most beautiful "Lloyd" wicker baby carriage. "And what is the price?" I asked the clerk. To my dismay, the Lloyd carriage was exactly \$25, but I told him I would take it and I wrote a check for that amount. They were to deliver it that evening.

I went home with mingled feelings of joy and fear, happy about the new buggy yet what would Robert say! When he came from work I had a good supper ready. "Did you get the baby buggy?" he asked. "Yes" I said, and immediately I began to describe it with great gestures telling all of its good points and how wonderful it was. Then I paused, waiting for him to ask the price—but he didn't. When I could not stand the suspense any longer I said; "Why don't you ask what it cost?" "Well" said he, "What did it cost?" "Just every cent we own" I said and then I waited humbly for my chastisement. "Louie" he said, "We think we have the best baby in all the world, so surely he should have the finest buggy in all this world!" I breathed a sigh of relief and in that moment I first found out a deep and tender spot in Robert's character. Nothing was ever too good for his wife and children. Sometimes I know it worked a hardship on him, and he overdid his strength in an effort to give things to us, so as the children grew up, I tried to talk to them and have them see it was not right for them to ask too much from their father.

For some time Miami had been a branch of the Globe Ward, but Miami was a new growing town and just after we came there, they organized it into a ward. Then they started to build the new L.D.S. chapel. All of us donated, but Robert spent every hour he could spare to finish the carpenter work on this building. When finished, it truly was beautiful.



Louie, Bobbie and Joseph AND the "Lloyd" wicker carriage



Father hauling hay with old Bess and Nig.

Our second baby, Joseph, came to our home in Aug. 1916. That Christmas we went to Thatcher and spent the holiday week with Robert's parents. He really enjoyed this visit. Two years later, baby Ruth came to our home on 1 April 1918. When she was two months old we sold the little home in Davis Canyon. We were planning on moving to Woodruff, but found that we had to stay four more months to complete the work Robert was doing, so we moved to Live Oak and lived in a company house for the four months. We left Miami in Oct. 1918 heading for Woodruff. We went by team over the White Mountains to reach there. We had a team of mares, Bess and Nell. Daddy thought a lot of Old Nell and he treated his animals very kindly.

My mother died in 1916 and Father wanted to move to Utah, so he had written us to see if we would not like to come home and run the farm for a few years and if we liked it there we could buy later. These were our plans then, when we moved from Miami. We got to Woodruff just as a terrible epidemic of influenza was striking the country. Several who had died from flu at surrounding ranches

were brought to Woodruff for burial. Since Robert was the only carpenter in town, he was pressed to ~~making~~ making caskets for them. It was the first time he had ever done that line of work, but he kept it up for the next 25 years of his life. He got to be an expert at making and decorating them. People came from the surrounding towns and insisted on Robert making the casket for their departed kin. Only twice (from out of town people who were complete strangers) did he ever take pay for his work. He had been in Woodruff only a short time when the Armistice was signed on 11 Nov. 1918 to close World War I. It was a great day of rejoicing for all.



The home in Woodruff as it looked when we came in 1915.

Woodruff is a small farming community and the water for irrigation is taken out of the Little Colorado River about three miles south of town. Here a dam forces the water into a storage reservoir from which a long ditch carries it to the farms below. When we moved to Woodruff the dam had been out for four years. The orchards and most of the fruit trees were dead, alfalfa fields gone and the ground as dry as powder. Just as we arrived in Woodruff the

new dam was completed and everyone was working hard to put in fall wheat and other crops, but we were too late and Robert did not get his in before the snow came. It was an early fall and a long cold winter with lots of snow. The thermometer stayed way below zero, pipes froze and burst and I was lonesome for my folks who were gone. The days seemed long when I was shut in with the babies. Food was high and had to be purchased in Holbrook, then we had to buy alfalfa for the team and seed for next spring's crops. Despite all, Daddy did a lot that winter. He cleared the dead fruit trees from the four acre orchard, worked on the dam, ditch and flumes and took only irrigation credit for his work because the company was without funds.

Spring brought sunshine and cheer and I was never lonely there again until Daddy left me and went to his Heavenly Home. We bought a cow and had milk, cream and butter. Robert was a good gardener and he liked that work. We always had the finest garden in town and our home was always surrounded with the most gorgeous flowers of every kind, color and shape. There were the large Adalias, some were 14 inches in diameter, beds of flax, poppies, daisies, cinneas, rows of all different colored iris, the old-fashioned hollyhocks and giant trees of snow balls. Then there were the weeping willow trees---there were none prettier in all of the land. Robert rose early each morning while we all slept, to work on the flowers and garden before going to his day's work.

Two years after we moved to Woodruff, 15 Aug. 1920, Robert was made first counselor to Bishop James Brinkerhoff in the Woodruff Ward. He held this office until May 5, 1934. He was also a member of the Woodruff Irrigation Board for many years. He was Stake Religion Class Director of Snowflake Stake and Superintendent of Stake Genealogical Society.

In 1921 we bought the old rock house and eight acre field down by the Butte (from my Father) also a small field on the west side of the river from Victoria Jackson.



The Woodruff Butte

Feb. 1, 1921, our fourth baby, Martha, came. She was blue-eyed, had no hair, weighed 8 pounds and was a happy, lovely child. She has always been of cheerful disposition. She was born at Holbrook, twelve miles from Woodruff. As we had no doctor in Woodruff I stayed at Holbrook for two weeks before her arrival.

Another red letter day in Daddy's and my life was 16 Apr. 1922. Robert baptized our oldest child, Robert Levi.

Work at home continued on, with four children there was meals, washing, ironing, house cleaning and countless else. Daddy worked late and early in the garden, fields and many days on the floors and irrigation ditch. This was a problem that consumed more time and money than farming did, because each rain, flood or storm, damaged or washed out the ditches and dams.

One Thursday morning, 26 Oct. 1922, a fine baby boy came to our house. He weighed 9 pounds and had beautiful red hair. When he was eight days old, his father blessed him and named him James Lincoln. Two years later our son Joseph Richmond was baptized by his father on 9 Aug. 1924. And on Nov. 22, 1924, beautiful baby Elizabeth came to our home. She weighed only 6 pounds and was blessed by her father at eight days. She was always a frail child.

As I mentioned previously, Robert always wanted the best for his family. We did not have modern conveniences then, no running water in homes and wood stoves were used for heat and cooking, so each morning before he went to the field, Robert would see that there was wood in the house and water brought from the well for use that day. He always planned to have an individual water system to pipe the water into our home, and on 4 Feb. 1926, this dream came true. On that day they finished drilling the well on the hill (61 feet through solid rock) and laying the pipe from the tank to the house. We had a bathroom, hot and cold water at the sink, bath and washroom. We were the first home in Woodruff to get water piped into the house.

Our children were growing up. Bobbie was ordained a deacon 7 Feb. 1926 and Ruth was baptized by her father 4 Apr. 1926. Later that same year, Bobbie was on a trip through his 4H gardening work back to Chicago. He raised tomatoes and his father was a great help with his advice and council. Bobbie left Woodruff 26 Nov. 1926 and returned 7 Dec. of that year.

Well, we were still using coal oil lamps in Woodruff and the scrub board for washings and the sad iron for all of those stiff colored shirts. Robert wanted something easier and more convenient for his family and church, so 22 July, 1927, he had an electric Koler plant installed at his home. After that we washed and ironed with electricity and lighted our home and the church buildings. It was a wonderful help and improvement, but very expensive.

Our baby girl was born 13 Oct. 1927 and blessed at 8 days by her father with the name of Marilyn Mathers. Our daughter Martha was baptized 1 June 1929, Robert Levi was ordained a teacher 2 June 1929 and James Lincoln was baptized 26 Oct. 1929.





Our flock of White Leghorn hens in 1930 on the hill above the home.

and for a time I was not expected to live. But I am grateful that my life was spared. Robert was still on the mail, his cares worries and expenses were many. It was at this time he was obligated to borrow \$500 from his life insurance.

Elizabeth was baptized 13 May 1933 and Marilyn on 13 Oct. 1935, both by their father. The boys received the Priesthood step by step. All the children went steady to school and finished the 8th grade in Woodruff and then each one finished their high school by riding the bus either 12 miles to Holbrook or 28 miles to Snowflake.

We all worked in the organizations of our little ward. Father always took a leading part. He always called the children together night and morning for family prayers and he set good examples in kindness, cheerfulness, keeping the Word of Wisdom and keeping the Sabbath Day. He loved his family, his neighbors, his friends and his animals. He especially loved flowers and beauty.

Robert's untiring work as head carpenter for the Irrigation Company never let up during his 25 years in Woodruff. Their water troubles only grew with the years. Polls broke the long 4 mile ditch and washed out siphons and flumes. Robert supervised and helped put them back year after year. Because of his efforts one of the flumes was named the Ison Flume. Robert paid \$13 irrigation tax on every acre of ground that he farmed until 1 July 1939 when the debt of

Two years later, 7 June 1931, I had a major operation at the Gallup Hospital in New Mexico. My husband had a mail contract with J.B. Pace to deliver mail from Holbrook to Heber, Ariz. so his life was full keeping the children under control, driving the mail and coming to see me when he could. Ruth was only 14 years old then, but she and her father cared for the home in a wonderful manner. In March of 1932 I had a terrible sick spell with pneumonia



Our family 1936



On the left is Old Nig, father's pet horse. If horses are in Heaven, I am sure that father will have him there. Here Martha and Lincoln are going for a ride.

\$100,000 for building the last dam was paid off. That day Woodruff had a great home coming and dedication of the dam.

Robert went back to driving mail. This time he had a contract with Mr. Udall for the route from Holbrook to White River and McNary. On Sept. 9, 1933, he let out two sons, Joseph and Robert take the mail route. Two masked bandits stayed a day-

light robbery on the mail truck at Bull Hollow. They cut 3 mail sacks and got away with \$22,250 of payroll money for the McNary Lumber Co. Bob and Joe were left with their hands tied behind them and their feet tied together beside the mail truck. Papers and letters were flying everywhere.



The Ison Flume



The old mail truck plowing through the snow at McNary 1940

Before this time, Bob had finished a 27 month mission in Texas, he and Ruth were both married and Joseph was attending college at the University of Ariz. Ruth had gone two years to the University and Martha started her college at Flagstaff.

Robert had always been a great hand to take the family on trips when he could manage both the time and money at once. He went to the Petrified Forest many times; up the canyon for picnics and to Six Mile

on the Colorado, to gather small black walnuts and wild grapes. He went down to Mesa to see the Arizona temple during its construction and several times we went to the Grand Canyon. One time we stayed a week at the Canyon and heard each night different lectures by the Rangers about the formation, the plants and Indian life of the Canyon. Robert had planned all of our married life to someday go back to Kentucky to see the old home, the hills of his childhood and his kinfolk. We did this in 1940. We left home in our new Chevrolet car in July 1940, and were gone seven weeks. Lincoln and Marilyn went too. We traveled 7,000 miles, averaged 21 miles to the gallon on gas and came home with Arizona air in all five tires. It was a wonderful trip.

First we went to see Robert's cousin, Isaac Ison who lived in Isonville, Kentucky. He always said Isaac was his favorite cousin. I suppose it was because there was only one years difference in their age and they had played together, slept together and been almost inseparable from baby days until the time that Robert came to Arizona at the age of 17. Isaac did not know that we were coming and what a surprise it was to see Robert after 45 years absence. I never saw men embrace, kiss each other and weep as I saw them then. Over and over he would say, "Is this really little Bobbie?" While to me he was a large heavy-set man.



Daddy by the old well in Burke, Ky. This and the barn were all that was left of his childhood home.

Well, the grandparents, uncles and aunts had all passed on, but there were many cousins, though all of them were old men and women after so many years, but we had a wonderful time and they treated us royal. We visited their homes, went to the cemetery and took pictures of the grandparents graves and spent a lot of time at Robert's childhood homestead. The house had been torn down. Only the barn and well were still there. The well was still in use though, and we drank of its clear, cold water. The two little graves were on the hillside, well shaded by a huge hickory nut tree that Robert had planted as a slim twig just before leaving for Arizona. The blackberries were ripe everywhere and my what a feast we did have. We spent three weeks in Kentucky, then went to Pontiac, Michigan to visit my brother Joseph. We saw more Ison cousins in Bethal, Ohio, visited Washington, D.C. and then went on to the Atlantic Ocean at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Robert had spent a lot of his time here while on his mission. We bathed in the great ocean, gathered shells and thrilled to know that we had been from the Pacific in the West to the Atlantic in the East. From here we took the coast drive to Savannah, Georgia and down to the ocean there through beautiful Palm Beach drive.

Then we turned the car West and came home. We found all well when we arrived and we were grateful for our long, safe and pleasant journey.

During the next year we finished our home. Two summers before, 1933, Robert built the loveliest petrified wood fence across the east and north of the home. It took eleven large truck loads of petrified wood. First he put two rows of cut rock on the bottom then fitted the large pieces of petrified wood on top of the stone wall with cement, arranging the black, red, yellow and white wood into a beautiful pattern. It was beautiful when completed and stands as a monument to his name today.

The home had always been large; four bedrooms, full size basement, large dining room and kitchen combined, front room, bath, halls and washroom. Although it had never been finished outside, we had made many improvements inside every since we bought the home in 1921. Now we finished the exterior. Robert plastered and stuccoed the outside walls white and put on blue shutters as trim. It looked very pretty with lawn and flowers and the curved walk from the gate to the front porch. "Memory now is on her knees" as I think of the grand times we had as a family on that porch each evening.



One section of the petrified wood fence.





The home as it looked when we finished it.

had been born and raised in Virginia. Then when land in Kentucky was opened for settlement, they came over the Wilderness Road, with only a trail they climbed "Blackie", came through the Cumberland Gap, along the Clinch, Holston, and French Broad Rivers and came to make new homes among the Kentucky hills. Now the Isons are in most all of Kentucky's 120 counties and they are numerous in all the counties of her eastern boundry from north to south.

When we left Cumberland we went to Scott County,

Virginia, and did some research work at the Court House and among its citizens. Then we followed the "Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia" by the "trail of the Lonesome Pine" into Elliott County and again visited Cousin Albert and Isaac and many more for just a few days. It was fall and the nuts were ripe. How the children loved to gather them. They gathered all that we could haul of the large black walnuts, hickory and hazel nuts, then we started for home. Father left a fine patch of cane he wished to make into sorghum and he worried for fear the frost would beat him to it. We were gone only one month this time.

In October of 1941 there was to be a big Ison and Cornett Reunion in Letcher County, Ky. and our kinfolks were urging us to attend. Could we go the 2000 miles again in just one year? Father didn't know, so we left the decision to chance. I submitted a story of "Famr Life" into a magazine contest and won. That seemed to be our answer, for the prize money paid our gas and oil for the trip. And again we went to Kentucky.

It was fall and the red and yellow foliage was beautiful. We went by Carlsbad Caverns and enjoyed that masterpiece of nature. We had the three girls, Martha, Elizabeth and Marilyn with us.

This time we came into Kentucky through the Cumberland Gap and by the mighty Cumberland Falls. Coming first to Letcher County we stayed with Uncle Alexander and Aunt Arminta Ison. Yes, the Ison and Cornett Reunion was a huge affair. The girls marveled that there could be so many Isons together at once. We were the only L.D.S. among them. Our stay in Letcher County was very pleasant. We gathered many family group sheets of our kinfolks there, who were cousins to our Ison folk in Elliott County. The early Isons



An evening camp coming from Ky. to Arizona in 1941.

The first person that we met on arriving in Woodruff was our nephew, Glen Pace. His greeting was "Well Uncle Bob, it's mighty good that you have come, for I have prayed the frost off from your fine cane patch just as long as I could!" It was the first of November so the sorgan was made. It was beautiful and clear. Nobody in Woodruff could equal Robert's molasses art. He always did the rolling for the neighbors.

But father wasn't well it was plain to see. He hadn't felt good all summer but he never complained about not having any pep. The neighbors wanted him to do small jobs of carpenter work as he had always done for them. He was working at James Brinkerhoff's home when the road crew came and wanted him to supervise a bridge building project near town, and they put the pressure on him to go help. I did not want him to go for the weather was cold, it was outside work and he wasn't well, but father never said no to anybody, so he worked for two weeks until the bridge was completed---and so was he.

When he returned he gave up and layed on the couch all day then, in the evening he would go out to cut a little wood and bring it in. Our boys were all gone then. Robert, Joseph and Ruth were married, Lincoln was attending school in Tempe and Martha was staying with Ruth in Chandler. Only Elizabeth and Marilyn were at home and they rode the bus to Holbrook High so never got home until dark. Father wouldn't let me get the wood in.

When I ask him if he was sick or hurt anywhere, he always said no, that he had taken a little cold and just wanted to lie down most of the time.

It was the latter part of February 1942, the 100 Centennial year for the Relief Society, and all of the church was celebrating. Each ward in our Stake was putting on a pagant and while March 17 is the real birthday of Relief Society, the different wards had to start their celebrations the last of Feb. so that the Stake Board could attend all of the ward celebrations. It was Woodruff's night and I had helped a lot with the planning of the pagant. Everyone in our little town would go. Since I was a member of the Snowflake Stake Relief Society Board at that time, I did want Father to attend and urged him to go with me, but he said he didn't feel like it. He would rather remain on the bed, then I planned to stay with him at home, but both he and the program committee put the pressure on me to attend the pagant, so I went. When I returned he was asleep and both of us apparently slept all night, but the next morning Robert was not able to get out of bed. Sometime during the night he had a stroke and his right side was paralyzed. Ruth and Lincoln had come to visit us on the night of the pagant so we took him to Dr. Parks at Holbrook as the doctor would not leave his office to come to Woodruff. We had a good car and took him in comfort. The doctor said his liver was enlarged twice its normal size and gave him medicine and had us bring him back for 10 shots, one every other day. He improved fast, got up by himself, could walk with only a slight limp, fed himself with his left hand and even went to Priesthood meeting and church the Sunday after taking his last shot.

We were all so happy that he was getting well. Ruth went home and Lincoln went back to school. Martha came home to help me. Monday morning he was worse. He had a terrible pain in his right side. We went back to the doctor. He said there was nothing that he could do. I ask him to give another 10 shots, but he said that he could not take more. The doctor gave me a pain killing medicine, but it did not releave him any. He could not breath when he would lie down, so he sat in bed. Father only stayed in bed one day, Wed. March 19th and early in the morning hours of March 20th he left us.



Robert Lee Ison in his own front room just before the casket was closed Sunday afternoon March 22, 1942

I was shocked. I didn't expect him to go, thinking that our faith and prayers would keep him. There is a passage in the Doctrine and Covenants which says; "If any are sick among you, call in the Elders and have them anoint them with oil and bless them, and if they are not appointed unto death, they shall get well." We did have the Elders. That very night our Bishopric administered to him and I had faith he would get well. I could not believe that he would leave us, but I had to accept "Be still and know that I am God."

His funeral was beautiful, if there is such as a beautiful funeral. It was the largest ever held in Woodruff. The whole surrounding country came. The children were all present, and my two sisters Lydia and Ruth. His brothers from Thatcher were there also, but his mother (age 33) was not able to come.

Dr. Neal Heywood, my brother in law, and a co-worker with Dr. Parks told me after Robert was laid away, that they were certain his death was caused by cancer of the liver.

He was buried in Woodruff Cemetery March 22, 1942. With a great struggle I had to believe "he was appointed unto death" and except the following;

"To belong wholly to the past is a fatal thing. The past can never live again except in memory. Its shadow is with us yet, but its reality belongs to the ages that never return....Neither God nor man may alter the record of what has gone before."

Richard L. Evans.

